

A N
ABSTRACT

Of some Years

OBSERVATIONS

Concerning such

General and Unperceived Occasions

O F

Sicklinefs in FLEETS

A N D

S H I P S of *W A R*;

Which come not under the Cognizance of Physick
and Surgery ; But are wholly to be judged of,
and remedied by Persons of Experience in the
Affairs of the Admiralty.

For whose Perusal alone it is Calculated and Printed.

Printed in the Year, MDCCIX.

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A N A

ALBERT

Observations

OBSERVATIONS

General and Unperceived

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O F

Sickness in FLEETS

A N D

SHIP OF WAR

Which is not under the Cognizance of Physicians
but is wholly to be judged of
and corrected by the Officers of the Fleet
and the Admiralty

For which I am indebted to the Gentlemen and Officers

Printed in the Year 1740

T O
The Right Honourable
T H E
Lords Commissioners,

For Executing the Office of
Lord High-Admiral of *Great-Britain*.

MY LORDS,
THIS Abstract, containing
nothing but what comes un-
der your Lordships Cogni-
zance, was put in Print for no o-
ther end, than for your Lordships
more easy Perusal. The Author
never designing to make it Publick,
without your Lordships Approba-
tion. Your Lordships are farther
Humbly desir'd to observe, That
the first Article of the Three in-
tended upon this Subject, is all
that

that the Author's Circumstances
would as yet permit him to pick
out of the numerous and various
Observations he from time to time
has made upon, the great and many
unperceiv'd Occasions of Sicknes
in Fleets, and Ships of War. I
am,

MY LORDS,

Your Lordships most

Oblig'd, and most en-

tirely Obedient,

Humble Servant,

Ja: Carisle

An

10/11/17
wich

An ABSTRACT of some Years Observations, &c.

THESE Occasions of our Sickliness are treated of in the following Sheets, in three distinct Articles, *viz.* In

Article I. Such Occasions of our Sickliness that proceed from the nature of our Mens Duty, and Allowances of Keeping, besides their own want of Care in the Service.

Article II. Such Occasions of Sickliness which proceed from the want of rightly order'd, and used Hospital Ships.

Article III. Such Occasions of Sickliness as most necessarily flow from the usual Management of Physick, and Surgery in the Fleet.

Article I. Of the Occasions of Sickliness that arise from the nature of our Duty, &c. at Sea.

I shall briefly premise, 1. That although all Men of common Understanding are, at Years of Discretion, sufficiently enabled, by their common Experience (as the Beasts are by Instinct) to judge what suits best or worst with their Health; according to a vulgar Saying, (*viz. Every Man is a Fool or a Physician.*) Yet neither Man nor Beast can possibly make so effectual use of such natural notices, when they are under the Management of others, as when they are at their own Disposal. Witness *Guinea-Slaves*, and labouring *Cattle*; which seldom ail any thing, till they are put under

That Man and Beast at liberty are Physicians to themselves.

That the Nature of their Subjection, more or less, does hinder their making a right use of this natural Benefit.

the Yoke of others. Whence, both Man and Beast, by natural Instinct, hate Confinement ; and are never brought to comply with it, but by force of Custom and Necessity.

That for this Cause, Generals take measures to supply this defect.

2. That, for this very Reason, the greatest Generals have ever used more than ordinary Diligence to discover, and to remedy all such Occasions of Sickliness amongst their Men ; which proceed either from their own Neglects, or from the nature of their Duty.

That Physicians & Surgeons are not competent Judges of such matters. Tho' they may observe the Causes of 'em.

And may themselves be great occasions of Sickliness.

3. That Physicians and Surgeons at Sea, only regard Diseases already formed ; but have neither Power, much less any experience in Generalship, to prevent the general Occasions of Sickliness. Nay, on the contrary, these Men often are too generally no small Occasions of our Sickliness ; either through want of Skill, or Diligence ; and consequently, by suffering Diseases that might have been prevented by timely Skill, to run to a pitch of Malignity and Infectiousness, as shall be made appear, God willing, in Article 3. of this Essay.

Besides, that the ablest Physicians that ever appear'd in the World have made it out upon Record, that hardly one of ten Medicines in common use, is otherwise necessary, but for keeping up the Pomp of the Profession, and gratifying the Apothecaries, who have so long been the main Supporters and Introducers of most Physicians ; (whence the Fleet has been so commonly fitted with Medicines, much more for the Interest of the Apothecary, and his Favourites, than for that of the Service,) but rather very much to the contrary, as the said third Article will make good.

4. That the general Occasions of Sickliness treated of in this Article, are owing to the want of necessary Precaution, against the Injuries of the six following Particulars, that relate to what we call good Keeping, viz.

I. Of

1. Of the Air we live in ; namely, as well the open Air, as that within Board. For that the first of these is a most constant general Cause of our Sicknes, First general Occasion of Sickliness. appears palpably from hence, viz. That our Sickneses are all of one and the same kind, on Board of every Ship in the same Fleet, tho' not equally violent. That the open Air is a most effectual Cause of our Diseases at Sea. And, 2. That as the Season or Climate are varied, so do all our Distempers vary to the very same kinds. For instance, in our own Seas, our Feavers are most commonly Aguish, and tedious, especially Spring and Fall ; but as the Fleet proceeds to the Westward, our Feavers change gradually into very malignant, infectious, and mortal ones, all over the same Fleet, even before they arrive at the *West-Indies* : Whilst, in proceeding towards the *Streights*, and Southern Seas, they grow gradually more continual, and incline to Loosness ; which soon turns bloody and infectious.

But this might be made out by many Observations ; as of the great difference of Gravity and Springiness that is to be observed betwixt the Sea-Air, and that on Shoar. Likewise by the notable grossness of the Sea-Air, in comparison to that of the Continent, namely, by which it surrounds and covers our Land-Air and Soil, (in *Great Britain*, and other Islands) from the violent Heats of some more Northerly Countries, and from the piercing Frosts of some more Southerly Parts. Moreover, by that intolerable Stink it presents us with, in close, sultry, calm Weather ; by which it plainly discovers what noxious Contents it abounds with. Also by the suddenness, frequency, variety, violence, and unforeseen Alterations of its Storms ; which the more untoward they at any time happen to be, the more our Men are obliged to be exposed to them, contrarywise to what it is on Shoar. Which I hope will be enough to evince, that ten times more caution, if possible, is requir'd against the Injuries of the open Air And that it therefore requires far greater precaution than is usually had at Sea.

Air at Sea, than on Shore. And consequently, that more than ordinary Precaution, with regard to the following Particulars, is absolutely necessary, towards rendering our Fleets and Ships healthy.

And that particularly, upon the nine following Accounts.

These Particulars are, 1. The ill Consequences of that long Confinement of impress'd Men, on Board of Tenders; In want of sufficient Cloathing, Bedding, Room, Exercise, and too often even of Victuals. For, upon these accounts, I constantly observ'd the first Rise of Sickliness in our Ships, to be owing to such Men, who most commonly brought their Illness on board with them. 2. Of entring or impressing infirm, or otherwise useles Creatures but for number sake. For such I always found to be the very next subjects of our Sicklinesses; if not to be often before-hand with the other. 3. Of keeping poor naked Wretches (being press'd without Necessaries) two Months on Board, before that Slops (for bedding and cloathing) can be issued out to 'em. For such never failed, sensibly to augment the numbers of our Sick. As, 4. Of the Insufficiency of the usual Slops; which to my certain knowledge, many poor Sailors trusting to, have suffer'd very much by Sickness. 5. Of such as sell their Cloaths for a little good Suck (as they call the very worst of Spirits; for Suttling is still kept on foot by one means or other.) And who, rather than fail, will take up Slops and Tobacco of the Purser for that use. For which reason, I have often than once obtain'd of my Commanders, in Men of War, to have a search made for all the Spirits that were on board, and to have them secur'd, and serv'd out as occasion required. 6. Of such, who in great numbers, scorn to shift after being Wet, or have nothing to shift withal, who usually added not a few to our sick Numbers. 7. Of those who scorn to put on their Cloaths after hot Work, or in the Evening of a hot Day, and the

upper

the like. 8. Of such, who in great Numbers Dare all Weathers with open Breasts, and laugh at almost all Advices that pre-suppose Mortality. And, in the last place, of those who, in their Liquor, chuse to sleep any where, but in their Hammocks; as on bare Decks, Chests, or expos'd to cool Air, the scorching Sun, the Dew, Cold, and the like. For I never observ'd any cause of Feavers more common, Suttling being too sweet a Trade to be easily retrench'd.

How slight soever the abovesaid Occasion may seem to be, at first view, yet, if I may conclude any thing from constant Experience, these Means alone are enough to consume all the Navy Allowance for Medicinal Stores; provided a Surgeon be honest, and understand his Business; which was the only Cause why I found my self oblig'd to accept of Hospital Ships, sooner than 'twas otherways my Interest to do, as being at no Expence for Medicines in them.

It is true, the first two or three of the Inconveniences nam'd, may seem incapable of Remedy; because they are the unavoidable Results of Impressing, which is hitherto so indispensably necessary. Nevertheless I have often thought, and discours'd of an Expedient, among some Persons of good Judgment, which I could gladly wish some of deeper Understanding in such Matters had in Consideration; because I never could hear any material Objection against its Feisableness and Use, in this Particular, viz. To have all Her Majesty's Seamen cloath'd on a like foot, and in a corresponding manner, to that of the Soldiery (bating for Fashion to be adapted to the Work, and the Stuff, which for the Out-sides might be strongest Canvas, Tarpawling, or the like). For by this means, 1. The same Care would be had of the Cloathing, both by Commanders and Men, as is had amongst the Soldiery. By which means our Men would be un-

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speakingly better secur'd against the Injuries of the Air aforesaid. 2. Our Sailors would be thereby considerable Savers, and nothing nigh so much at the devotion of Landladies and Slop-sellers, that so much debauch 'em from the Service, as 'twill hereafter farther appear. 3. It might be made a Capital Crime to wear any other Cloathing, while in the Service, or till one is fairly discharg'd, or perhaps till one has actually recover'd a Receipt for his Cloathing. And, Care being taken that no other Cloathes are kept by any of the Men on board, I imagine it might prove a very effectual Expedient, as well against Deserting, as against the foresaid three first Occasions of Sickness, which I mention'd.

That the other six both deserve, and are very capable of Remedy.

But however that be (for I pretend not to be able to give a decisive Judgment in any of the Particulars I mention, in this Paper) yet I'm very inclinable to think, that the remaining Occasions I nam'd, and which very much increase our Sickliness, might, by good looking after, easily be remedied. For which I once had the successful Experience of a worthy Commander; who, speaking upon that Subject, was often pleas'd to tell me, he laid it down for a Principle, that Sailors, generally speaking, have as much need of good looking after, in all that relates to their Health, on board, as younger Folks in a Family; not only on account of what their Duty exposes 'em to, but, more especially, of their childish Indiscretion.

That the particular Air of a Ship, is a greater or smaller occasion of Sickliness, according to their Seasoning and Keeping.

Thus far of the Injuries of the open Air. Now for those of the Air within Board, which I hope easily to make appear to deserve no less Consideration. For that it, most commonly, is a very considerable Occasion of Sickliness, and Loss of Men, is palpable from hence, viz. Because any common reigning Distemper of the whole Fleet, is always observ'd to be considerably more fierce on board of some Ships, than

it

it is in the rest; without any other assignable Cause, than what we call the particular Unwholsomeness of the Ship, that is (in very deed) of the Air of the Ship. About which every one commonly make their Observations. As particularly that a Ship which is very tight under Water, and leaky above, is commonly unhealthy, in comparison to those of the contrary Conditions. Nor indeed can it be otherwise, in the main, with Ships, than with Houses, in this Particular. The last whereof being ill kept, or badly season'd, has been a notorious Occasion why one Family has suffer'd considerably more, by the reigning Distemper of a Season, than others. In a word, so noted an Occasion of desperate and fatal Sickliness has the unwholsome Air of a Ship been reputed, that no Pains have been commonly spar'd for correcting it. As by clearing a Ship of all the Sick at once; then washing, scraping, airing Chests and Hammocks, Fumigating with Pitch, and other Gums; sprinkling with Vinegar, yea even by letting in plenty of Water, by a Plughole, into the Bilge; and often, and much Pumping.

But the worst is, that notwithstanding all these Means are carefully us'd, the very same Ships prove in a little time, as unhealthy as before. Which seems plainly to argue, 1. That the unwholsome Air within board of such Ships, owes its hurtful Taint to the want of a like Seasoning, before, or at fitting out to Sea, as new Houses, or old, and for sometime uninhabited Ones always require, before a Family can expect to live healthy in them. 2. That this tainted Air, of an unwholsome Ship, is constantly supply'd with Recruits of its noisom Contents, from the very Materials of the Ship. Else the letting in of much clear, and pumping out all the choaking Bilge Water, with the other usual Methods above-mention'd, would effectually

That none of the usual Methods for rendering a Ship wholsome have been effectual, for the following Reasons.

effectually render such a Ship wholesome. Contrary to what our daily Experience teaches us. For as a pestilent Air is ever observ'd to infect even the Walls and Goods in Houses, so a long included Air, as well as Water, in a much pester'd Ship, may, for want of Communication with the open Air, putrify, and produce an ill Quality, that insinuating it self into the Materials of a Ship, may be a considerable time the occasion of unwholesome Air in the same Ship, as long included and damp Air renders Houses unwholesome. Nor is any thing more obvious to common Observation, than that Ships do generally require a proportionable Time at Sea, to that they lay up in, to make 'em healthy; and that even new Ships often require a seasoning Time there, before they are observ'd to be comparatively healthy. And therefore it follows, 3. That this Unwholsomeness may be prevented, or taken off beforehand (since some Ships are actually free of it.) And that more particularly by a different way of keeping our Ships in the Ordinary, and of seasoning new ones. For instance, at least for some time before fitting out, suppose that Ships be very much and often pump'd, by letting in Water on purpose, which benefits such Ships as happen to be very leaky while they lie up, have of necessary Course, and perhaps would be found to have been far more healthy, on that account, than such Ships as did not happen to require such frequent pumping, if the Difference were narrowly to be inquir'd into. Likewise were all the Cavities of Ships that lie up, especially for some time before fitting out to Sea, to be as clear of all manner of Lumber as may be possible, and much, and frequently expos'd to free and dry Air (if not also well season'd by as cautiously kept Fires, as we use in Bread-rooms, before we take in our Provisions.) No doubt it would sweeten a Ship considerably,

*How this might
probably be re-
medied.*

*By Air-holes,
as in Timber-
Ships, that
carry Masts.*